



# A HISTORY OF **HAMMERSMITH**

With grateful thanks and acknowledgement to 'Donald Insall Associates, Historic Buildings Team.'

## 2.0 Historical Background

### 2.1 Georgian Hammersmith

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries Hammersmith was a small rural village that was used as a summer retreat for the gentry and city merchants. Writing in 1705, John Bowack said:

*Hammersmith has several good houses in and about it, inhabited by gentry and persons of quality and for above a hundred years past, has been a summer retreat for nobility and wealthy citizens especially from about the year 1620 and the late unnatural rebellion.<sup>i</sup>*

The village was situated on the main thoroughfare from the west of England into central London and was located roughly four miles from Hyde Park Corner. Rocque's map of 1761 shows that the main roads which still define the town of Hammersmith had been laid out by this date including King Street, which was originally constructed as a royal route to Windsor, Shepherds Bush Road (formerly Brook Green), the Broadway and Queen Caroline Street. Buildings were clustered on both sides of these main roads and along the Lower and Upper Malls on the riverfront, extending westwards into Chiswick. The village was surrounded by fields and pasture.<sup>ii</sup>

Although Hammersmith was well connected by road, Hammersmith Bridge was not constructed until 1824 and boats were relied upon to connect the town with the Surrey side of the Thames. Stamford Brook Stream was also used to transport goods to King Street, seen on Rocque's map between Hammersmith and Chiswick.

During the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup> century Hammersmith grew to be an established village with a population of 5,600 recorded in 1801.<sup>iii</sup> John Cary's map of 1786 shows that Hammersmith, in comparison with neighbouring towns such as Ealing, Acton and Chiswick, was more developed and had a growing cluster of buildings situated around King Street, the Broadway and Hammersmith Bridge Road.<sup>iv</sup>

Pevsner notes that there were few buildings of importance in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Hammersmith. It had no chapel or place of worship until St. Paul's was constructed in 1650 next to Queen Caroline Street, which was rebuilt in 1882.<sup>v</sup> There were two manor houses of note, Pallingswick and Bradmore. Pallingswick Manor House, later known as Ravenscourt Park, was a medieval manor famed for being the home of Alice Perrers, the mistress of King Edward III. The house was extended during the 18<sup>th</sup> century when it was bought by George Scott, a successful brick maker, and it remained in the hands of the Scott family until 1887, at which point it was sold to the Metropolitan Board of Works and used as Hammersmith's first public library. The building suffered bomb damage during the Second World War and was subsequently demolished.<sup>vi</sup>

Bradmore House was originally constructed in the early-18<sup>th</sup> century as an extension to a larger house known as Butterwick House, which was most probably built for Henry Ferne, a Receiver General of her Majesty's Customs, who lived in the house until 1723. The architect of the building is not recorded, but it is often thought to be the work of the prolific baroque architect Thomas Archer. During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Butterwick House and Bradmore House were subdivided into two separate buildings and Butterwick was eventually demolished in 1824.

In 1913 the site was bought by the London General Omnibus Company and redeveloped as a garage. The garden façade of Bradmore House was re-erected adjoining a new garage building, and the building was raised from ground floor level and reoriented to face west rather than east.<sup>vii</sup>

In 1994 the site was redeveloped as part of the Hammersmith Broadway development. The building originally faced demolition but opposition from a local campaign successfully ensured its survival. The façade of Bradmore House was salvaged for a second time and the rear was reconstructed as a pastiche of an 18<sup>th</sup> century house. Although Bradmore House has undergone major alteration and lost its setting, it remains one of the most important historic landmarks in Hammersmith.

Another lost manor house of Hammersmith is Brandenburgh House, which was built in the reign of Charles I by Sir Nicholas Crispe, a local benefactor who also supported the building of St Paul's. Crispe made his money in brick making and also had successful ventures in trading and shipping. In 1792 the house was sold to the Margrave of Brandenburgh-Anspach and Beyreuth. The next

occupant was Queen Caroline of Brunswick, wife of George IV, who here kept up her small rival court pending her trial in the House of Lords, accused by her husband of impropriety. The house was demolished in 1822, a year after the death of Queen Caroline.<sup>viii</sup>

Although Pevsner was fairly dismissive of the medieval and Georgian buildings in Hammersmith there are a number of other smaller important historic buildings in the town centre, particularly along the riverfront, which illustrate the historic development of the town. These buildings include 11 and 12 Lower Mall, built in the early-17<sup>th</sup> century and listed Grade-II, Sussex House, c.1726, Grade-II\*, Westcott Lodge, c.1746, Grade-II, The Dove Public House, early-mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, Grade-II, Kent House, c.1762, Grade-II and Kelmscott House, c.1785, Grade-II\* listed and famed as the home of William Morris between 1878 and 1896.

Historically there were many more medieval and Georgian buildings lining the main roads and waterfront, which can be seen in contemporary depictions. Examples include Cromwell House in King Street which was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and demolished in 1913. During the late-19<sup>th</sup> century the house was famed as the residence of James Cromwell, a local brewer who founded the Hammersmith Brewery along The Creek.<sup>ix</sup> There were also a number of historic buildings on Queen Caroline Street, the early thoroughfare to the river. The Survey of London, published in 1915, recorded no less than twenty buildings dating to pre-1800, none of which remain. The Cannon Public House, first built as a modest 18<sup>th</sup> century cottage, is an example of those demolished.

## 2.2 The Development of Urban Hammersmith in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Typical of many suburban towns surrounding central London, development in Hammersmith gathered pace in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century following the arrival of the Metropolitan and Great West Railway line in 1864.<sup>x</sup> The tracks ran parallel to King Street and a station was constructed to the north-west of the Broadway junction, now the terminus of the Hammersmith, City and Circle Line. In addition, the construction of Hammersmith Bridge in 1824 introduced an important north-south connection. The bridge was designed by William Tieney Clark and was the first suspension bridge to be built over the River Thames.<sup>xi</sup>

New roads lined with terraced houses were constructed in the fields situated to the north-east of the Broadway and between King Street and the Malls on the riverfront.<sup>xii</sup> The earliest developments included roads such as Angel Walk and Bridge Avenue, which were developed with brick and stucco terraces, now listed at Grade-II. The roads laid out to the west of the Broadway tended to run in an east-west direction, blocking direct access through to the riverfront from northern roads such as King Street. However, a number of narrow north-south roads were maintained, as well as walkways in fields to the west of Hammersmith Bridge. Parcels of land remained undeveloped, generally sandwiched between new terraces, but these had been completely developed by the late-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Local commerce and industry also expanded during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. King Street and the Broadway were developed as the main commercial thoroughfares and a hub of local industry grew by the waterfront and included the Hammersmith Vestry Wharf, Kensginton Vestry Wharf and Hammersmith Iron Works.<sup>xiii</sup> A channel known as The Creek (of the Stamford Brook Stream) also extended to the south side of King Street, allowing goods and materials to be quickly transported to King Street. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century The Creek was also the location of the Hammersmith Brewery and other light industries, which remained in use until the 1970s and 1980s when the riverside began to be redeveloped with public and private housing.<sup>xiv</sup>

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century new terraces had been built to the west of the Broadway, infilling most of the open areas of land that had been situated in-between mid-19<sup>th</sup> century terraces.<sup>xv</sup> New roads included Rivercourt Road and Weltue Road, which connected to King Street in the north and the riverfront to the south. Additional transport links had also been constructed including the District Railway which opened in 1874 with a station situated to the south of the Broadway, as well as a tramline along King Street.<sup>xvi</sup> In 1887 Hammersmith Bridge was reconstructed by the noted civil engineer Sir Joseph Bazalgette, though he re-used the pier foundations from the original bridge.<sup>xvii</sup>

The rate of expansion in Hammersmith is recorded in the rise of the population, which grew from 5,600 in 1801 to 120,000 in 1901.<sup>xviii</sup>

## 2.2.1 The Heart of the Community: Civic and Religious Institutions

By the late-19<sup>th</sup> century Hammersmith was a well-established town with a number of civic, religious and educational buildings that were predominately situated on Shepherds Bush Road and around the Broadway. These buildings are marked on the 1896 and 1916 Ordnance Survey Map and included a fire station on Shepherds Bush Road, designed in 1913 by W E Riley now listed Grade-II<sup>xix</sup> and Hammersmith Library, designed in 1905 by Henry T Hare and now also listed at Grade-II.<sup>xx</sup> These buildings are some of the best examples of their type in London. There was also a police station that was subsequently rebuilt in 1939 and is now listed at Grade-II and Hammersmith Town Hall, which replaced an earlier Vestry Hall in Hammersmith Broadway that was built in 1896-7 by J H Richardson.<sup>xxi</sup> Indeed, Hammersmith might be described as the archetypal London town.

The Roman Catholics have always held an important position in Hammersmith and it is noted in the History of Old and New London, originally published by Cassell, Petter & Galpin in 1878 that:

*If there is one spot in the neighbourhood of London to which the English Roman Catholics look with greater veneration than another, just as the Nonconformist looks to Bunhill Fields Cemetery, that spot is Hammersmith, which contains an unusual number of establishments belonging to the members of that faith.* <sup>xxii</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century several new Roman Catholic institutions were established including the Covent of the Sacred Heart, designed by J. F Bentley in 1875, and Nazareth House Covent which provided a home for the aged, destitute, and infirm poor persons, but likewise an hospital for epileptic children. The Survey of London notes that the Benedictine Covent was built a few yards from Nazareth House and served as a training college for the priesthood. In addition, St Mary's Orphanage, a Roman Catholic School for girls, was constructed on Brook Green Road and St Augustine's Priory was built to the south-east of St Paul's Church.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Alongside the places of Roman Catholic worship, the colossal Grecian-ironic Anglican church of St Peter's was also constructed in 1827-9 to the designs of Edward Lapidge, it is now listed at Grade-II\*.<sup>xxiv</sup> The church of St John the Evangelist was built shortly after in 1857-9 to the designs of William Butterfield, also listed at Grade-II\*.<sup>xxv</sup> St Paul's, the oldest church in Hammersmith, was rebuilt in 1882 to the designs of J. P Seddon and H. R Gough. The church was much larger than the existing 17<sup>th</sup> century church and extended over the original burial ground. The monuments from the old church were re-housed within the interior of the new church.<sup>xxvi</sup>

## 2.2.2 Cultural Cornerstones

Historically, Hammersmith has always had strong links with public houses. Indeed, it has one of the one of the oldest public houses in London, The Dove Public House, which was built in the early-to-mid 18<sup>th</sup> century and is situated on the Upper Mall. However, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century numerous public houses were constructed in the area and the 1916 Ordnance Survey map shows no less than 10 pubs situated on King Street and the Broadway alone. The most notable included the Swan, 1901 by F Miller, listed Grade-II<sup>xxvii</sup>, St Christopher's Inn, 1911 by Parr and Kates, Grade-II<sup>xxviii</sup> and The Salutation, King Street, 1910 by A. P. Killick, also listed at Grade-II.<sup>xxix</sup>

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century several theatres were also constructed in Hammersmith. The most notable of these were the Lyric Theatre, built in 1880 but rebuilt shortly after in 1885 to accommodate more people and the Player's Theatre on King Street.<sup>xxx</sup>

## 2.3 Hammersmith in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

### 2.3.1 The Rise of the Cinema

Following the initial wave of construction of theatre buildings in Hammersmith in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, in the early-20<sup>th</sup> century the development of leisure buildings centred on the construction of cinemas. In 1909 the government passed the Cinematograph Act, which required films to be classified and showed in a controlled building with strict opening hours. The cinema emerged as a reaction to the act and developed as a unique building type in the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>xxxi</sup> The Electric Palace Cinema, constructed in 1910, was one of the first to be opened in Hammersmith and by the

publication of the 1915 Ordnance Survey map there was an additional 'Picture Theatre' located on Down Place and another cinema situated to the south of the Broadway.<sup>xxxii</sup>

In 1932 a new cinema was constructed on the junction of Fulham Palace Road and Queen Caroline Street. The cinema was designed in an Art Deco style by Robert Cromie and was owned by Gaumont, the building known as the Gaumont Palace. Now known as the Hammersmith Apollo, the building was listed Grade-II\* in 2007 and is one of the largest and best-preserved Art Deco cinemas in the country.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

In 1936 another cinema was constructed on the King's Road. It was built by the Associated British Cinema (ABC) and designed by their in-house architect, William R. Glen in an art deco style. It opened on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 1936 as the 'Regal' cinema. It is currently due to be demolished.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

### **2.3.2 Social Housing Estates**

From c.1900 large social housing estates began to be constructed in Hammersmith, the first of these was the Guinness Trust Estate on Fulham Palace Road, 1900. In the 1920s and 1930s more estates were developed including the Peabody Estate, 1926, situated to the north-west of Fulham Palace Road. Redevelopment also centred around the present site of Holcombe Street and Nigel Playfair Avenue, which contained some of the oldest and poorest housing. The construction of the Town Hall, 1930 and the Riverside Gardens in 1928, a block of artisan houses, cleared much of this slum housing.

### **2.3.3 The Great West Road**

One of the major developments in Hammersmith in the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century was the construction of the Great West Road in 1920-1925. The road cut across 19<sup>th</sup> century roads such as Rivercourt Road and Mall Road, divorcing the north-south links from King Street to the river. It also cut through the gardens of the Town Hall, divorcing the building from its setting. The King's Mall remained accessible via pedestrian tunnels running under the Great West Road, or from Hammersmith Bridge Road to the east. At the time of its construction, the Great West Road was seen as a desirable development as it facilitated the demolition some of the oldest and poorest houses in the area situated between the Town Hall and the Broadway.<sup>xxxv</sup>

### **2.3.4 The Second World War**

Hammersmith was badly bombed during the Second World War. An estimated total of no less than 419 bombs were dropped between 7<sup>th</sup> October 1940 and 6<sup>th</sup> June 1941. The London County Council Bomb damage map shows that most of the damage was concentrated to the buildings to the north and south of King Street.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

After the war, most of the damaged housing was repaired or cleared and redeveloped. A small area of land on the Upper Mall, which had previously contained some of the oldest terraced housing in the area, was redeveloped in 1951 as the Furnivall Gardens, a public garden affording impressive views over the Thames. New housing estates were also constructed in the aftermath of the war including the Queen Caroline Estate on Queen Caroline Street as well as the Aspen Gardens Estate, the Riverside Gardens Estate and Bridge Avenue Mansions, all situated to the south of King Street.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

### **2.3.5 The Hammersmith Flyover**

In 1961 the Hammersmith flyover was constructed. Designed by G. Maunsell and Partners, the flyover was one of the first examples of an elevated road using reinforced concrete. It was conceived to link Cromwell Road with the Great West Road whilst alleviating traffic at ground level, however, a substantial amount of traffic remains and the Broadway is extremely busy.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### **2.3.6 Late-20<sup>th</sup> Century Developments**

During the 1970s King Street began to redeveloped as a modern shopping and office district. Developments included the King's Mall; a mid-1970s building by R. Seifert and Partners including council flats, offices and a ground floor shopping centre. It also incorporated the redeveloped Lyric

Theatre, which had closed in 1966. The Town Hall, which was originally constructed in 1938 by E Berry Webber, was also extended in 1971-5 with a large 5-storey extension fronting King Street, which is currently due to be redeveloped. In the late 1980s the Broadway Centre was constructed to house the Hammersmith tube station and bus station and provide additional office and retail space.

One of the most successful late-20<sup>th</sup> century developments in Hammersmith was The Ark, an office building designed by Ralph Erskine in 1989 and described in the Pevsner volume for North West London as a 'remarkable office tower'. In 2006 the building was extended with a fifth and sixth floor.

## 2.4 Recent Development

Hammersmith is currently going through a surge of redevelopment. The designation of the Hammersmith Regeneration Area has encouraged the redevelopment of 1970s and 1980s blocks with new residential and office blocks clustered around the gyratory. Large office and residential blocks are also being constructed in the town centre.

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